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Statement submitted by World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being
circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council
resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Social protection has been prominent on the global agenda, particularly since the inclusion of social protection systems under Sustainable Development Goal 1, target 1.3, Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, and Sustainable Development Goal 5, target 5.4, Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies. While social protection policies and mechanisms played important role in alleviating poverty, measures that take into account the power dynamics within households and communities are needed for social protection policies and programmes to properly address gender inequality in a transformative way (Policy in Focus No. 38-Social protection: towards gender equality).

Social protection policies and programmes often apply one-size-fits all model and do not adequately integrate gender dimension into their design and implementation. Often the age dimension is missing as well, with programmes broadly targeting women and children and not reaching adolescent girls and young women thereof robbing them of a chance for a better future.

In many societies, women and girls do not enjoy the same access to public services, such as healthcare, education, transportation, as men and boys, or these are not safe for them to use. They also perform disproportionately large share of work in informal sector and unpaid care leaving them without access to social protection and public services.

Social protection and access to public services are essential for empowerment of women and girls. As the world's largest movement for every girl and any girl, with 10 million Girl Guides and Girl Scouts in 150 countries, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girls Scouts is concerned about the lack of gender dimension in design of social protection and public services, and more broadly, in systemic violation of girls' and women's human rights. We call on UN Member States to demonstrate strong political will, genuine commitment and invest resources to create mechanisms that effectively protect and empower women and girls, and lead to gender equality. This statement also includes challenges and solutions shared by girls and young women from around the world.

Girls' and Women's Access to Social Protection Programmes and Public Services

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by poverty, inadequate health care, and lack of access to education and decent job opportunities. They also traditionally have more limited access to resources like land, credits and perform disproportionate share of unpaid work. Due to structural inequalities women are often concentrated in informal employment in low-skilled and low paid jobs, which by definition is work with no access to social protection (Overseas Development Institute Working paper 435. Informality, women and social protection: identifying barriers to provide effective coverage, 2016).

Many social protection programmes, including cash transfers, safety-net oriented public works programmes and others, target women and girls as main beneficiaries (FAO, Rural Transformations Information Note #2. Social protection and women's empowerment). Yet, this does not automatically lead to empowerment and well-being of women and girls. While social protection has great potential for promoting women's and girls' empowerment and reducing gender inequality, too often social protection policies and programmes fail to integrate gender dimension into their design and implementation.

Even when women's and girls' resources are increased through social protection programmes, lack of empowerment can exclude women and girls from the decision-

making processes in the family and management of these resource, as well as can affect household power dynamics and traditional roles of men as breadwinners, which can lead to incidents of violence.

Access to public services by women and girls varies across the world. While availability of accessible public services might differ from community to community, a common thread found in most of communities is that girls and young women often do not feel safe accessing public services, or services are not tailored to their needs. In areas where public services, such as water supply are not available, the burden of providing water for households still falls disproportionately on women and girls, especially in rural areas.

Recommendation

Social protection programmes cannot achieve women's and girls' empowerment in isolation. Unless the programmes take into account specific needs of women and girls, the complex social systems, social norms and power structures surrounding them, the effectiveness of these efforts will be undermined.

- Social protection schemes must be designed through an integrated approach, linking with other community interventions, social services and gender equality strategies, so that these can lead to sustainable solutions.
- Governments and local authorities must ensure girls' and women's participation in the design of social protection programmes to ensure they are gender-sensitive and needs-based.
- Governments must recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility as outlined in target 5.4 of the Sustainable Development Goal 5. Informal work, such as domestic and care work must be recognized and included in the pension system.
- Governments must take serious measures to tackle the discriminatory perceptions and expectations around girls' and women's role in the society. Gender equality starts with valuing girls and upholding their basic human rights.
- Governments and employers need to guarantee paid maternity leave and invest in free or subsidized child care, in particular with comprehensive array of support services offered to teenage mothers.
- Interventions need to ensure provision of age-appropriate services, as well as improve dissemination of youth-friendly information about available public services.
- Governments need to invest into gender impact evaluation to track long-term impact of these programmes on women across the life cycle.

Understanding Intersection Between Social Protection and Violence against Women and Girls

Across the world, violence against women and girls remains one of the most flagrant and most tolerated human rights violations. Women and girls who find themselves in situations of violence, are more vulnerable to social and economic risks. They are also disproportionately affected by poverty, inadequate health care, and lack of access to quality education.

Social norms and economic violence often restrict women's and girls' mobility and decision-making, as well as their access to education and employment. These limitations create greater barriers to social protection benefits for women and girls. Ensuring survivors of gender-based violence benefit from social protection programs requires careful consideration of their unique needs and circumstances.

Girls and women are often reluctant to report being attacked and harassed out of fear of being ostracized by their community and family and having no faith in institutions that are supposed to protect them. Often there are no services where they can go for support or information in the community, or information about the existing services is not widely available.

Girls and young women often do not feel safe accessing public services. Out of 7,000 respondents of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts survey conducted via U-Report, 71 per cent of girls and young women said sexual harassment against girls is a problem in their school, college or university; 53 per cent said the threat of sexual harassment distracts or makes them avoid studying or taking part in school activities; 52 per cent said fear of harassment makes them avoid public transport or public places.

The underlying ideologies of male superiority and discriminatory social norms legitimize different manifestations of discrimination and violence against girls and women both in the private and public domain. There are many norms and expectations around the types of work done by women and men, girls and boys; about the value of women's work and the value of girls' education. These continue to shape the unequal status and role of girls and young women in the society and affect their access to available services. Girls' opportunities need to be unconstrained by stereotypes and harmful social norms.

Recommendation

- Governments and local authorities should take strong measures through organising public awareness campaign and prevention education that address unequal power relations between boys and girls, men and women, and which condone discrimination and violence. These should be closely linked with social protection schemes targeting women and girls.
- Governments need to invest in data collection efforts to understand the nature and scale of violence against women and girls to inform the design of social protection programmes.
- Governments and service providers need to ensure that gender-based violence is carefully considered in the design, implementation, and evaluation of social protection programmes.
- Robust support mechanisms for survivors, including practical and emotional support, as well as improved access to justice need to be guaranteed by the Governments and local authorities. In particular, the needs of girl survivors of violence must be ensured by providing services, programmes and responses that take into account the best interests of the child.
- Bold and concerted actions by Governments, civil society and business sector are needed to challenge and transform the harmful norms through a combination of legislative reforms, national awareness raising campaigns and educational programmes for both boys and girls.
- Human rights, gender equality and healthy relationships education should be integrated into school curricula to tackle the ideologies of male superiority, as well as increase girls' awareness and understanding of their rights.

Social protection policies and programmes can be powerful tools for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as attainment of the sustainable development goals.